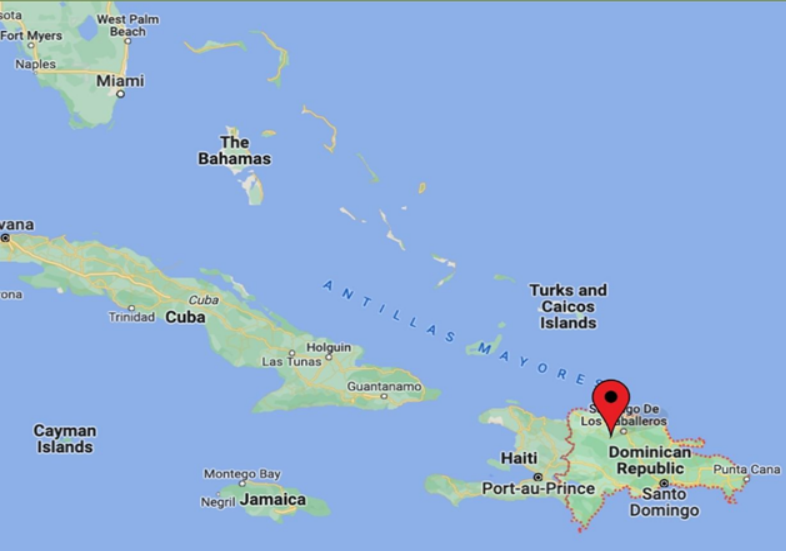




PERSPECTIVE ON TRAFFICKING & EXPLOITATION IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Prepared by Caitlyn Scaggs, Executive Manager of New Hope Girls

Where is the Dominican Republic and what's it like?



A 2 hour flight from Miami
and you are THERE!

- A Caribbean country that shares the island with Haiti
- Most people know the DR for Punta Cana & other gorgeous beaches
- 40% of the population lives in poverty - the US has an 11% poverty rate, in comparison (census.gov)
- This beautiful country is cloaked in the darkness of exploitation, abuse, and trafficking.

"Income distribution remains unequal, quality of health services is inadequate, and poverty still affects just over 40 percent of the population, with 10.4 percent living in extreme poverty. Most poor families live in urban areas and 63 percent of them are headed by women."

*Source: World Food Programme, wfp.org



**"Our research reveals that teens are being
openly sold for sex on the streets in the
Dominican Republic."**

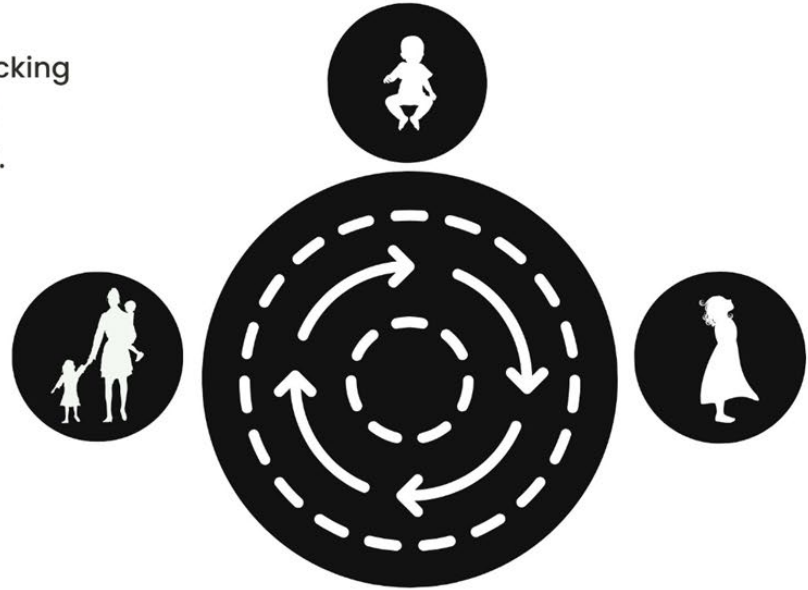
– International Justice Mission

As noted by the U.S. Department of State, in their 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Dominican Republic, "The Dominican Republic is a destination for sex tourists primarily from North America and Europe for child sex trafficking. Sex trafficking of 15- to 17-year-old girls occurs in streets, in parks, and on beaches."

A 2015 report from the International Justice Mission New Hope's area of impact (LaVega) as one of the portions of the DR with the highest prevalence of commercial exploitation of children.

BREAKING CYCLES OF EXPLOITATION

The problems of sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking are rampant within the Dominican Republic. Without intervention, no girl living in poverty is left untouched.



Our average age at intake is ten, but we care for and support girls as young as two.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

SAFE HOMES

REFUGE & RESTORATION
LONG TERM CARE
THERAPY

EMPLOYMENT

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY
MENTORSHIP

OUTREACH

PREVENTION
MENTORSHIP
RESCUE





Why are we talking about the Dominican Republic?

- Trafficking and exploitation impact every corner of our globe and are part of a cross-border criminal networks.
- In our Safe Homes we currently have 1 American Citizen and 2 girls who will be moved to the US to live with relatives. It is interconnected.
- We must understand the broader landscape of these issues to fight back in fully informed ways.

The youngest child we ever received was a 6 month old baby that was intercepted while a trafficker was attempting to smuggle him out of country.

What is the same in the Dominican Republic & United States?

- Fighting back against these issues take people who are committed to doing this hard but critical work – thank YOU!
- Each situation is unique and requires an open mind, fresh perspective and individualized approach.
- It is easy to miss exploitation and trafficking, even when it is right in front of your eyes.
- Most people victimized by trafficking and exploitation are women/girls.
- Layers and layers of trauma are created and significant support is needed to help survivors.
- For adults, trafficking and exploitation often intersect with addiction, domestic violence, and criminal activity.

What is different in the Dominican Republic?

SOCIAL WORK SYSTEMS

- Adoption is very uncommon – near impossible unless it is a Dominican/Dominican adoption
- Many children lack basic papers – some even lack names/birthdays when they enter into our care.
 - Being "invisible" like this make exploitation all the easier & breaking cycles all the harder.
 - No papers = no school which leads to lack of opportunity as an adult
- The island is shared with Haiti which creates a refugee stream of "invisible" and easily exploitable people.



What is different in the Dominican Republic?

JUSTICE & LAW



Dominican Republic President Approves Bill to End Child Marriage

January 6, 2021 was a historic day in the Dominican Republic's fight to protect children from violence. President Luis Abinader approved a bill that eliminates all legal grounds for child marriage and safeguards the fundamental rights of children, particularly girls who had been vulnerable to this prevalent practice.

The Dominican Republic has the highest rates of child marriage in the Latin America and Caribbean Region. "This harmful practice results in a lack of protection, inequality, lack of opportunities, and early pregnancy for girls. It also has a direct impact on the country's economy,"

What is different in the Dominican Republic?

JUSTICE & LAW

- Judges have to personally go on the rescue operations with security staff – it is not law enforcement that rescues.
 - Consider one of the most prestigious government leaders having to enter into danger & often filth to enact rescue.
- Policing is much different – you don't call them for help.

It took



YEARS

To see our first predator
prosecuted & convicted.

What is different in the Dominican Republic?

LEGAL PROSTITUTION

- Prostitution is legal – brothels are in plain sight
- This creates a complicated framework for criminal activity to thrive
- Tourists are already flocking to the DR for the beautiful beaches – so the sex tourism becomes a natural extension.
- Children end up wrapped up in this lucrative legal-but-sinister industry
- Some of our worst and most horrific rescues were very young children brought out of formal trafficking rings within coastal portions of the country.



HOW DO THE TYPES OF **CONTROL** COMPARE/CONTRAST?

The Same

- White Collar (Gang Controlled)
- Family (Often survival exploitation)
- "Boyfriend" (Pimp)

Different

In the Dominican there is also heavy use of ruse tactics – the poverty is so extreme and mothers are so desperate that they believe what they wish could be true.

- "I have a great job for your daughter in the city..."
- "You are so beautiful! I have a modeling job for you!"

THERE IS HOPE.

We met Sabrina when she was eight and she was our first New Hope student. Like almost all the girls in our care, she came without a birth certificate, which is a prerequisite to be enrolled in school.

We worked to get her papers and bring her up to grade level academically. She was a hard worker and had a unique ability to fully grasp that she was created for more. She knew it deep and that knowing has propelled her into personal growth and greater opportunity. She is studying Business Administration and working in our workshop helping to bring best practices to our shipping and inventory systems.

We are excited to walk beside her on her personal and academic journey into a future full of hope!



**NEW HOPE GIRLS WAS CREATED FOR
GIRLS LIKE SABRINA.**

WHAT CAN YOU DO IN RESPONSE?

- Communicate well with other good guys! We know criminals are excellent at networking, sharing tricks of the trade, and aligning around evil – choose to do the equal but opposite for rescue, refuge, and restoration.
- Continue to seek education about the global landscape and your role.
- Support organizations like New Hope Girls. Choose to walk with us as co-laborers.
 - Follow, donate, shop, support!
- Take good care of yourself as you push back on the darkness.
- Recommit to do your job in the United States with tenacity – when you fight for the vulnerable here you fight for the vulnerable everywhere.



WITH GRATITUDE

Thank you for learning about us, our work, and our shared fight.



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NEW HOPE GIRLS